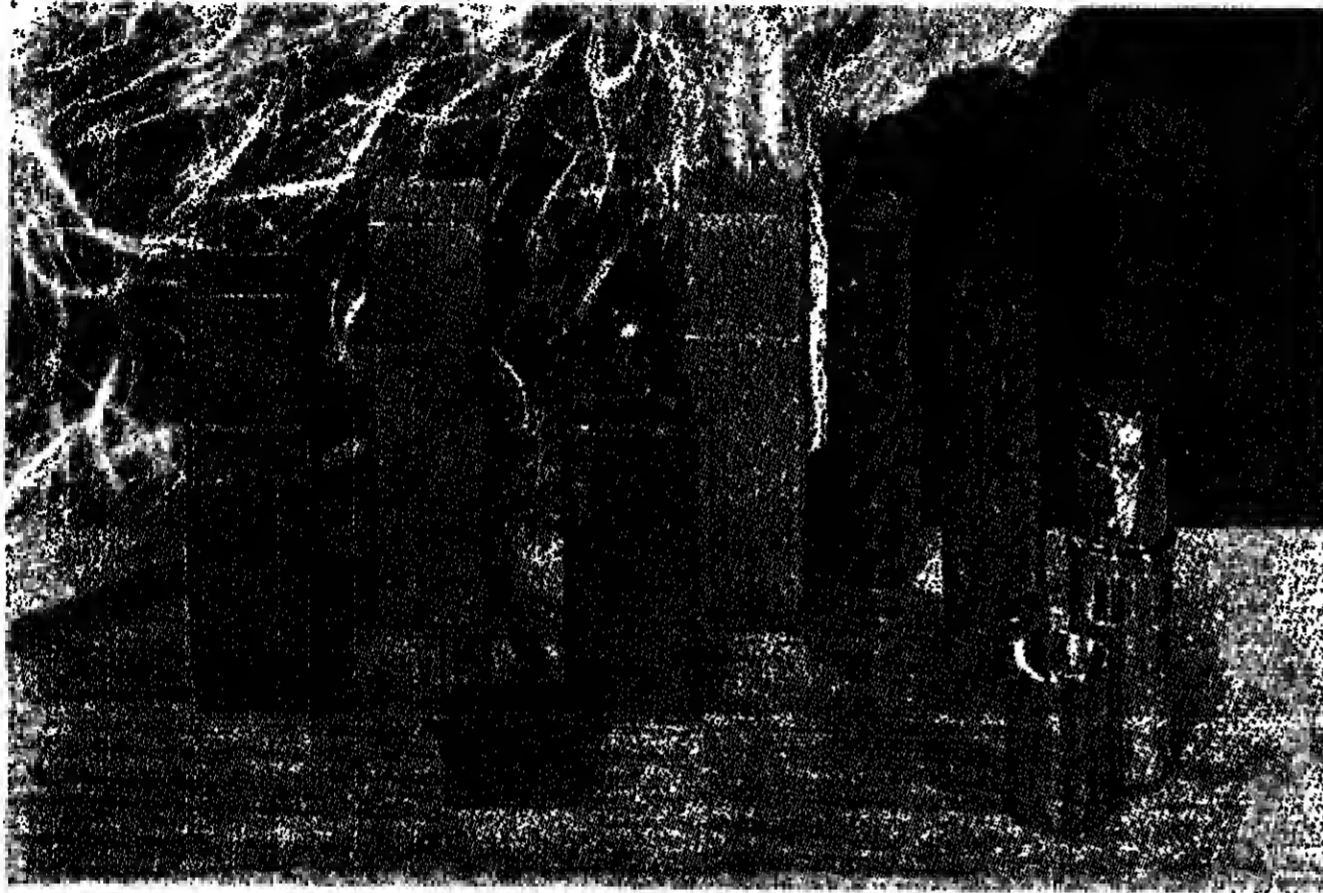


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The German Tribune

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EEC compromise likely over commodities

The European Community is prepared to meet the developing countries halfway, one headline read after Common Market Foreign Ministers had spent yet another session burning the midnight oil.

Headlines read much the same a week beforehand in the wake of the Rome summit of EEC heads of State and government.

Yet despite this gesture it remains to be seen whether the industrialised countries and the Third World will approach or reach agreement in the ongoing negotiations about commodities and debt funding.

Third World demands, as laid down in the Manila Declaration, amount to the conclusion of agreements in respect of all major commodities, with price stabilisation backed by a common fund.

This a priori demand was rejected in one

way or another by virtually all the industrialised countries at Unctad IV in May last year, but the EEC now seems at least to be aiming at a joint approach to future negotiations.

The Common Market also appears far more inclined to consider concluding a certain number of commodity agreements, albeit not the full eighteen. Both Brussels and Bonn feel that agreements on six to ten commodities will be ample.

During recent talks within the EEC and, of course, at Unctad this country has advocated its own version of commodity-price stabilisation.

Bonn's proposal now seems to have been accepted outside the Common Market, with other industrialised countries considering the idea worth incorporating in the negotiation package.

The toughest problem, of course, is the form the common fund is to take. Bonn in particular still seems averse to the basic idea of providing the common fund with cash. This, it is argued, would be to abandon major free-market principles in world trade and to pave the way for controls.

Now, however, the Common Market as a whole appears to have come round to the idea that the common fund will in practice perform a useful offset role when large quantities of one commodity are auctioned and equally large quantities of another commodity require support buying.

The United States and France seem prepared to go even further on this issue.

The time is unquestionably not yet ripe to anticipate even so much as the prospect of a successful conclusion to the talks with Third World countries.

It remains for instance to be seen how the Group of 7 will respond to



World Bank chief McNamara in Bonn

President of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, right, with SPD chairman Willy Brandt in Bonn where they discussed the talks taking place between the industrialised states and the developing countries. Brandt is to chair an international commission to deal with North-South Dialogue problems. (Photo: dpa)

IN THIS ISSUE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS	Page 2
Differences of opinion intensify between Bonn and Washington	
SECURITY	Page 4
'Bugging' affair leads to a review of security service controls	
WORLD TRADE	Page 6
Bonn steps up imports to help boost world economy	
ENERGY	Page 8
Solar energy could become the 'fuel' of the future	
THE ARTS	Page 10
Art and the Medle et Kassel Documenta	
MEDICINE	Page 12
How doctors can diagnose disease by looking at a face	

Declaration signed on human rights

Bremer Nachrichten

proposals that represent a watered-down version of their own demands.

Much will depend on whether the feel major aspects of the transfer of resources have been settled.

How far, for that matter, will the industrialised countries go towards meeting Third World halfway on debt funding?

It is certainly gratifying to note that at least the EEC is making another attempt to speak with one voice. It conspicuously failed to do so at Nairobi, where official spokesmen for the Common Market had to make do with bromides.

Peter J. Velle
(Frankfurter Neue Presse, 7 April 1977)

Geneva commodity talks adjourned

The breakdown of the 107-nation Geneva UN conference on a "common fund" for commodity-price stabilisation cannot be rated much of a surprise. It can hardly be considered to have intensified the North-South conflict either.

What the developing countries deemed "complete failure" was in fact a foregone conclusion. Delegates to the conference were experts, not politicians, and briefed mainly to sound out the other side's views and demonstrate determination in respect of their own.

Unctad is unlikely to stand much chance of agreeing on specific proposals until such time as the political framework of a new international economic order has emerged.

Political decisions need not be expected prior to the resumption of the North-South talks in Paris at the end of

May, but decisions must then be reached, otherwise there may well be a reversion to the atmosphere of confrontation.

The West must reach agreement beforehand how large a slice of the cake the industrialised countries are prepared to allow the developing world.

This issue will be on the agenda of the Western economic summit in London on 8 or 9 May, yet even within the EEC we still differ despite the joint approach to raw materials formulated at the Common Market summit in Rome.

West has so far shown little willingness to get down to brass tacks on a proposed transfer of resources. Bonn in particular must be specific if there is

to be serious discussion of debt settlement and commodity-price stabilisation rather than pointless trench warfare accompanied by ideological crossfire.

It was noticeable at Geneva that the Third World is increasingly seeing no difference between East and West. Viewed from the South the Communist countries are every bit as much rich Northerners as are the industrialised countries of the West.

The Communist countries came in for equal criticism alongside the erstwhile colonial powers and the United States. In future they will no longer be able to plead innocence when it comes to the hardships faced by the Third World.

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, 5 April 1977)

Before the EEC Council of Ministers got round to considerations of hard cash in Luxembourg on 5 April, fine-sounding words were uttered as best-fitted a special occasion.

The Council of Ministers, the EEC Commission and the European Parliament pledged themselves in writing to respect human rights, the constitutional principles of member-States and the European convention on human rights.

This undertaking was as long-overdue as it ought to have been a matter of course. It was rendered necessary by an appeal to the Karlsruhe Constitutional Court in respect of an EEC farm price arrangement and a judgment passed in 1974.

The Treaty of Rome setting up the Common Market twenty years ago includes not even the barest suggestion of a catalogue of human rights. The EEC was, after all, primarily an economic amalgam.

It has since been appreciated that this is insufficient as the basis of what will, it is hoped, at some future date be a European political union.

Integration has, moreover, made so much progress over the years that the basic rights constitutionally guaranteed

Continued on page 2

